#### MOLTKE'S STRATEGY IN 1866

A Review of the Seven Weeks' Campaign in Which the Austrians Were Defeated.

He Violated Some Rules and Axioms, but Knew Whom He Was Dealing with, and Made the . Best Possible Use of that Knowledge.

By Gen, Viscount Wolseley, K. P., G. C. B.

THIRD ARTICLE. The most futile species of military 'criticism is that which unhesitatingly condemns the strategy of any campaign because it has evidently contravened or violated some dictum on war by Montieuculli, Turenne, Frederick the Great, or Napoleon. All the wise sayings of those masters were based upon their own experience of war, as they knew and practiced it, under the conditions then existing. But when those conditions have been entirely altered by modern inventions and new appliances; when the dangers those wise sayings were pointed at have been buried, or at least neutralized, by these new appliances, it is the role of a parrot to keep on repeating them. It displays the absence of war instinct and of common sense-the only permanent source from which strategical and tactical rules can be derived; it evinces an inability to comprehend the natural genius of the science, of which you know only its written problems and published rules. You mistake the shadow for the substance, and think you thoroughly understand geometry because you can enunciate Euclid's propositions.

The man who has mastered what are commonly styled the "rules" of our science, but who has not taken in either its spirit. its rational genius or deep principles, is apt to find fault with Moltke's strategy in 1866. He points with a triumphant air to what Napoleon said repeatedly as to the danger of operations which depend for success upon the concentration of two armies or two or more divisions of an army that start from different bases very far removed, one from the other. This danger is always great, and is multiplied many times when the point selected for concentration is within your adversary's territory—as Gitschin was your adversary's territory—as Gitschin was in 1866—and when it may at any moment be occupied by him in force. The possession of such a point enables the general whose army is concentrated there to operate on what is known in war as "interior lines," and gives him a great advantage over his enemy, as is forcibly illustrated by many of Napoleon's best campaigns.

The ablest critics of this war agree that Benedek made nothing of the advantages which his central position afforded him. But the fact that Moltke's strategy afforded him those chances is not of itself a sufficient reason why we should necessarily condemn that strategy. Moltke knew his man, and took liberties he would not have dared to venture on had he been opposed to a strategist as able as he was himself.

BENEDEK'S BLUNDERS.

BENEDER'S BLUNDERS. As usual, it is easy now, long after the event, to see how faulty were Benedek's arrangements. Without any doubt, his true course was to have concentrated in northern Bohemia, and, whilst he held Prince Frederick Charles in check with Clam Gallas's column and the Saxons, to have fallen with his whole army upon the Crown Prince. The bungling slowness of Prince Frederick Charles's movements after he had gained the passages of the Elbe, also increased Benedek's chances had

Elbe, also increased Benedek's chances had he done so.

For Benedek to reap full and complete advantage from the possession of Gitschin—which he might have occupied—he must have crushed one of the two invading armies before the other, held in check by a comparatively small force, could come to its assistance. This is the essence of the strategy of "interior lines." Unless his position gave him this strategical advantage he would be tactically crushed on the field of battle, as Napoleon was at Waterloo, by the attack in flank of one of the two separated armies, whilst heavily engaged in front by the other. As Colonel Maurice, in his most able essay on "War," says of Napoleon upon that occasion, "Though the bulk of the French army was still between its opponents that was a position of disaster." The decisive battle of Koniggratz is another similar illustration of an army in a

ter." The decisive battle of Koniggratz is another similar illustration of an army in a central position being tactically crushed between its two opponents, whilst endeavoring to win through the strategical advantages which its position afforded.

Those who criticise Moltke's plans for the 1866 war in a hostile spirit too often forget that he moved the two separated armies by means of the electric telegraph with as complete precision as if they had been concentrated and under his own eyes.

When the two Prussian armies had made their way into Bohemia, instead of at once

their way into Bohemia, instead of at once uniting, Moltke kept them designedly about one day's march apart. He did so in the hope of securing the tactical advantage of engaging his enemy in front with one of the two large forces into which the Prussian army was divided, whilst with the other he fell upon the Austrian flank or rear. This is what he actually subsequent-

ly did at Koniggratz. ally known. During the now historical inally known. During the now historical interview at the windmill of Bry. Wellington, assuming that his army would be concentrated at Quatre Bras on June 16, and that it would not be attacked there, made the following proposal to Gneisenau: That the English army should march from Quatre Bras, to fall upon Napoleon's flank and rear whilst he was engaged in front with the Pressians at Ligny. Gneisenau, who the Prussians at Ligny. Gneisenau, who disliked out great Duke, objected, and insisted that he should simply join and support Blucher there. Was it this conversaion at Bry, and the tremendous effect produced by the Prussian attack upon the flank of the French army whilst it was heavily engaged with Wellington at Waterloo that taught Moltke, or at least impressed him with, the value and power of such a battle stroke? It is, at any rate, a fact that Von Moltke, in his study of the 1866 campaign, says: He had always considered the most effective mode in which two armies can act in concert, and bring about the most telling results, was that which brought one upon the enemy's flank and rear, whilst the other was heavily engaged on the battle-field, with that same enemy in front. At the moment during Koniggratz when Prince Frederick Charles was in direct distress, suffering heavily, and yet unable to make any impression upon the enemy beyond the Bistritz, and when nothing could be seen of the Crown Prince's army, the King, turning to Moltke, asked him how he thought matters were going. His answer was: "Your Majesty will win to-day not When Moltke said this to the King his clear, well-founded calculation of chances reminds us of the unruffleable imperturbability of Marlborough, of the almost soothsaying prescience of Napoleon.

REQUISITES OF A GREAT LEADER. There was nothing emotional about him, no more than there was about Wellington or Napoleon, although the latter often assumed an enthusiasm he did not feel. The pulse of all strong leaders, when in the field, must be deep-seated, hidden far away, and not to be counted measured by even the most attentive observer. He is invariably carefully watched, and his mien searchingly scrutinized by all around him, or who, for even a few moments, see him or are brought in contact with him. No matter what may be in his mind, his whole outward bearing must be that of the successful gambler, and his face bright with the cheerfulness, and glee, and confidence of the man on the winning side. When Napoleon pretended to carry his heart upon his coat-sleeve, and to allow onlookers to see into his inner emotions, it was a carefully prepared bait. It was the bird-lime of the wily trapper, the cleverly-assumed expression of the finished actor, whose abled him thus to play upon its amiable

intercommunication. This danger is in-tensified when each of the independent forces has to look to its own special base for supplies. Napoleon points out that an army so divided lays itself open to be beaten in detail, and that it ought to be so beaten if opposed to a man who knows his

danger in any plan which violates this prindanger in any plan which violates this principle—for principle of strategy it certainly is. Without doubt Moltke's scheme upon which the two great Prussian armies crossed the mountains into Bohemia, in 1866, did violate that principle, as that principle was understood and applied in the Napoleonic era. But it cannot be too frequently asserted that it is the great general who knows when he can afford to operate in a manner entirely opposed to rules which he manner entirely opposed to rules which he had, perhaps, for years dinued into the heads of those he wished to instruct in the science of war. But many circumstances may conduce to render such a proceeding not only safe, but desirable. And if the circumstances in 1866 be duly studied it will this was one of those exceptional occasions, and that con-sequently Moltke did right. It must, however, be freely admitted that to have attempted such an operation before the electric telegraph was invented would have been mad rashness had the enemy been commanded by a skillful strategist;
nay, more, that even in 1866 had the great
Napoleon commanded the Austrian armies
the Prussian forces would have been hurled back into the mountains, defeated in de-tail. But, then, Moltke knew full well that Benedek was no Napoleon. He correctly estimated him as a commander at his true value. That loyal, brave, but unfortunate general said of himself that he was no strategist. Moltke was well aware of how weak was Benedeck's authority, and how strong was the faction at work against him in the then unreformed army of Aus-tria. Plans you would not dare to adopt against a Wellington you do not scruple to put into execution against a Benedek. Jo-mini points out that Napoleon did not hes-mate to play tricks with Mack which he would not have ventured upon with the Archduke Charles.

MOLTKE AND NAPOLEON. But must we utterly condemn Moltke's plan, as pedantic critics, crammed with Jomini, often ask us to do, because it afforded openings and chances to his opponent? I should like to ask them if they as utterly condemn Wellington's plan for the Waterloo campaign, because of the chances it gave his opponent? Napoleon knew how to take advantage of all such chances, and in that instance he took

knew how to take advantage of all such chances, and in that instance he took them in, as it were, at a glance, and did very nearly destroy the two armies opposed to him by taking advantage of them.

Over and over again Napoleon's strategical and tactical plans left open great chances to his opponents, if they had been clever and quick enough to perceive, and had known how to use them. But the whole gist of the matter is in that if. Napoleon studied the character and genius of his adversary as closely as he did his maps of the seat of war. His first thought was, "What will so-and-so do under these circumstances?" Jomini impresses upon his readers that had the allies at Napoleon's battle of Dresden attacked in the manner he indicates, Ney must have been driven into the Elbe. If, in the Austerlitz campaign, the allies had waited for the Prussian army, and if that army had moved as quickly as it might have done, it is not easy to see how Napoleon could have escaped destruction.

These illustrations might be multiplied, but, after all, war is but a game in which the calculation of chances is an important factor, and in which the general who risks nothing will very seldom gain much. It is, it always has been, the possibilities against you that are missed by your antagonist which afford you the best chances of victory.

What was the great danger of this opera-

What was the great danger of this operation? First, as Napoleon so often pointed out, that each commander, not knowing what his colleague was doing some hundred miles off, would play—might be forced to play—for his own hand; that the combined operation as planned would not, or could not, come off, and that consequently each of the generals for the time commanding independently, would be attacked in detail, as best suited the convenience of his concentrated adversary. But that danger was removed in this instance by danger was removed in this instance by the fact that the generals commanding the two armies crossing the mountains into Bohemia were in constant communication by electric telegraph with one another back along their lines of communication to Berlin, and with the commander-in-chief of all the nation's armies, who, during the operations, remained in that capital. The danger of failure in all such complicated schemes, against which Napoleon enlarged, was in this case reduced to a minimum, for the daily movements of each army were the daily movements of each army were controlled from Berlin. Neither could possibly get out of hand, and both acted as much in unison and concert as if their lines of advance had been only a couple of hours' ride one from the other.

MOLTKE'S ACTION DEFENDED. The power which the electric telegraph gave Moltke was most important, but the telegraph ought also to have helped Benedek. With the lines of telegraphs and railway at his disposal, I do not think he should have allowed the two distant Prussian armies to cross the mountains into Bohemia and unite, as they did, under his very nose. Had a Napoleon commanded the Austrian army, the plan adopted by Moltke would, in my opinion, have ended in disaster. But with a Napoleon for an adversary, would Moltke have adopted that plan. I distinctly answer no. Therein hes one of the secrets, one of the great difficulties, in the practice of war. But, under the circumstances as they existed when the two Prussian armies crossed into Bohemia, with many railways and telegraphs to assist in the operation, I believe that Marlborough, Frederick the Great, Wellington and Napoleon, each and all would have acted as Moltke did then.

But, urges the book-warrior, was Moltke justified in depending upon the lines of telegraph which connected him with each telegraph which connected him with each of the two armies during their passage of these mountains into Bohemia? Might not the wires have been easily cut along their respective lines of communication? I don't think so, and if the routes they followed are closely examined this will be evident. But, if they had been cut anywhere, a few hours—say the time mounted messengers riding hard would take to cover twenty or even thirty miles—would have sufficed to have fully repaired and once more put have fully repaired and once more put them in working order. Immediately behind each army, say for one or even for two marches' distance, there may have been only a single wire connecting it with the permanent lines of the commercial and national telegraph systems in rear. But along that distance, it may be safely assumed, it would have been almost impossible for the enemy to have cut the wire, owing to the number of troops then necessarily moving along the roads so close to the armies then in motion. Moreover, until the break had been repaired, the messages could be carried over the gap by mounted men, and retransmitted, either backward or forward, from a temporary office. I have seen the military operator easily carry in his pocket an instrument designed to meet this contingency. Messages could also be sent over the gap whilst it was being repaired, by means of ordi-

nary flag signals. In fact, both these armies were bound ot keep open, and, consequently, to protect their respective lines of communication. If these lines were intercepted by the enemy, neither army could have advanced, for their food and supplies came by them.

They lay along railways which had to be carefully guarded and protected. But the protection so afforded to the railways was sufficient to guard also the lines of telegraph along them, and without which telegraph those railroads themselves could not have

been worked. So much as regards the telegraph line immediately in rear of the armies commanded by the Crown Prince and by Prince Frederick Charles. But besides the great lines of telegraph along which orders were sent to those two armies from Berlin, and reports of their movements were transmitted back to the King's headquarters, there were also the ordinary commercial lines of electric telegraph, not only of Prussia and Saxony, but, I may say, of all Europe. Before the Crown Prince's army entered the mountains it operated through a region closely interlaced with telegraph wires erected for commercial purposes. It would have required a hostile army to have cut, and held them cut, for any length of time. Distance weaknesses.

As Moltke's critics love to point out. Natition of messages when transferred from poleon urged upon his hearers how ex- | one main line to another-is not an element tremely difficult it was to place any de-pendence on schemes which involved the blizzards in New York, which temporarily enter fully into all the points which must action of two or more commanders com- destroyed the telegraph lines and stopped all have been present to Moltke's mind when pelled to act for days independently, and the road traffic, the distant quarters of the he resolved to push these two armies across without any power of constant and rapid city communicated with Wall street the mountains independently and at a

through England, and vice versa, by sending messages over the several Atlantic ca-bles which could be respectively reached from those two severed parts of the city. So close is now the network of telegraph lines in all civilized countries that if one or more lines be cut in front you can almost always send your message back over some line that will enable you to get it by There must always be a great element of a roundabout road to its required destina-

> IMPORTANCE OF THE TELEGRAPH. During the Ashanti war, when the telegraph lines through Spain were blocked, that via Constantinople to London was open. During the war of 1870 the German headquarters on the march from Metz to Sedan daily obtained their news of French doings from Paris via London. During the Le Mans campaign, when direct communication between flank and flank, seven miles apart, was impossible, complete and effective communication was established by telegraphing along a circuitous route 240 miles

When Napoleon inveighed against operations such as that by which the concentration was effected of the two great Prussian armies in the northern angle of lozengeshaped Bohemia, he never dreamed of the possibility of being able to maintain the constant, certain and secure communication between the divided forces that was maintained in 1866 between those armies by means of the electric telegraph. Communimeans of the electric telegraph. Communication by electric telegraph is a most powerful factor in strategy which did not exist, was not even dreamed of, in the Napoleonic era of war. In discussing the changes in both strategy and tactics which modern inventions have necessitated the mind is so full of steam vessels, and railways, and improved rifle and field guns that we are prone to siur over the importance of the electric telegraph.

In using the maxims of the great war masters of the seventeenth, eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, in any criticism of recent military operations, the rapidity, certainty and security with which messages can be transmitted, orders sent and communication between widely-separated forces maintained, must be reck-oned with. Its great importance can best be realized by a careful study of Moltke's plan for this invasion of Bohemia.

The more that plan is examined the sound-

er and wiser it appears, although it does seem to violate a well-known principle to which Napoleon attached the utmost im- | son to-morrow,

By the promptness with which Moltke seized the moment when circumstances most favored the passage of the mountains into Bohemia, he made evident the military genius that was within him. He was not responsible for the dispersion of the army into those two units, so far removed one from the other. That dispersion is an instance of where the exigencies of political complications were allowed to outweigh strategical considerations. He had not moved those two armies into Saxony and Silesia, respectively, with a view to the most effective invasion of Bohemia. They were already in those provinces, which that occupied not for army or strategical reasons, but to meet the complicated requirements of the political situation prior to the declaration of war, and while the question of war or peace still hung in most favored the passage of the mountains prior to the declaration of war, and while the question of war or peace still hung in the balance. The problem before Moltke was, how he could most safely and most quickly insure the mutual co-operation of those two armies for the purpose of giving battle before Austria—the unready—could concentrate and make ready for it. He did not, he could not, eliminate from his scheme all elements of danger. What great general has ever been able to do so. He adopted the boldest course open to him, generally the safest in the end, and, fearlessly grasping the nettle danger, crushed its sting by the firmness of his grip. the firmness of his grip.

WAS THERE A BETTER PLANT Why Benedek acted as he did is a question beyond the scope and subject of this article. What I wish to discuss here is: What better course than the plan he adopted was open to Moltke at the beginning of the "Seven Weeks' War," when he found the Austrians were concentrating in Moravia, and not in Bohemia? We must not forget that, as already stated, the Prussian forces had been and were still divided into practically two armies, one on the north-eastern side of the lozenge formed by the boundaries of Bohemia, the other on its northwestern face, and were about 150 miles apart. What was the information and the reasoning upon which Moltke formed his plans? He knew the Austrians were very scattered, and could not concentrate all their fighting strength for some time to come, even at Olmutz. A large proportion of the troops were still far behind that place, and Benedek had taken no effective steps to close the passes into Silesia against the Crown Prince. Clam Gallas, with one army corps, was far away, being then in touch with the first Prussian army, against which he had done nothing to close the mountain passes from Saxony. Moltke consequently determined to assume the offensive by the invasion of Bohemia, though seriously hampered in his schemes by the King's determination not to be the first to actually draw the sword.

What Moltke would have liked from the first was a purely offensive campaign against the Austrian army in Bohemia, but the safety of Berlin—an open town—rendered it necessary to dispose of the Saxon forces before he went for Benedek's army. An early attack upon Saxony also enabled him to forbid to the Austrians the Saxon passes through the Ertz Gebirge. The movement of Prince Frederick Charles across the mountains would, Moltke calculated, be taken by Benedek as intended knew the Austrians were very scattered,

across the mountains would, Moltke cal-culated, be taken by Benedek as intended his guard as to his real intentions-and, in fact, it did so. The Austrians were still armed with the muzzle-loader, whereas the would not expect—of itself a great recom-mendation in its favor—and faces verified

the correctness of his assumption.

Without any doubt a man so versed in the science of war, and in all that had been written upon it from the earliest times by the greatest generals, must have often at this time seriously questioned himself as to what it was possible to do. "Is there any other way in which these two armies can be as safely united before the Austrians be as safely united before the Austrians information then in the general's posses-have effected their concentration, as by at once pressing through the mountain passes plan of campaign in 1866 will bear the most once pressing through the mountain passes in front of them whilst they are still open, in order to meet near Gitschin?" How often must he have put this question to himself and pondered over it, for it was then the great problem before the Prussians.

USE OF RAILWAYS IN WAR. As long as armies depended for food and stores and munitions of war upon carts and wagons drawn along ordinary country roads or even great highways, the strategic plans upon which they moved had to be framed in accordance with the general direction of those routes. The existing lines of railway similarly influence all plans for the movement of armies nowadays, but they enable much larger armies to be used now than formerly, and enable those armies to be moved much more rapidly. Large magazines of food and ammunition can be fermed at all important junctions and big stations, rendering the subsistence and supply of an army a much easter matter than was the case in Napoleon's wars. Had there been a railway to Moscow in 1812 that campaign would not have ended in French disaster. But railways can be more easily and far more quickly destroyed than was the old-paved chaussee. Hence the increased sensitiveness to any attack upon them and the large number of men now required for the protection of their bridges, viaducts and water-tanks. Indeed, their liability to attack by raiding cavalry, or, as in the American civil war, by large forces of mounted infantry is a new and vital feature in determining the The long-headed Moltke had seriously pondered over all these matters before 1866. and, without doubt, he had fully grasped

the use made of railways by the Americans. both North and South, in their war. But not so the Austrian War Office. Its generals were apparently still deep in Jomini, to the exclusion of all other teaching. The line of railway upon which the Austrian army depended at this time for supplies ran close along the Prussian frontier.
Consequently the Crown Prince's army in Silesia not only guarded that province from any direct attack through the mountains upon Neisse, but it seriously threatened

that line of railway.

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great distance apart. In writing the history of any war it is difficult to describe all that was in any general's mind when he

MOLTKE'S ACTION WAS WISE. other of Moltke's campaigns, but in the foregoing remarks 1 hope I have said Prussians had the needle-gun, which had proved so successful in the Danish war a couple of years before. Moltke very naturally relied much upon the tactical advantage it would give his army. In fine, the plan was one that Moltke felt his adversary would not average of the did in 1866. I hope I have made plain the soundness of his strategy when, on June, 22, he telegraphed to Gorlitz and to Neisse, and ordered the two armies, whose headquarters were respectively at those two places, "to advance into Bohemia and seek to unite in the neighborhood of Gitschin." All such orders must be measured and judged, not as if they were the oracular enunciations of an immutable law, but as grave and momentous decisions given under a certain specific belief in the then condition of affairs, based upon the searching scrutiny of all whose intimate knowledge of war enables them to rightly understand the principles of stategy.

In nothing is a little knowledge more calculated to lead men astray than in the science of war-the most complicated of all sciences. It will generally be found that those who are most sweeping, most absolute in their criticisms of military operations, base their dogmatic conclusions upon some axiom enunciated by some great soldier of a former generation. They cling to and repeat that maxim as if it were in war what the Ten Commandments are in morals. Hence, in my opinion, much of the hostile criticism that has been launched against Moltke's strategy in 1866.

As stated early in this article, the present German empire is the handiwork of three great men, all eminently remarkable

in their own line and after their own fashion. Can Germany ever hope for another such trinity to guide its destinies, as when these three stood in one group, straining their sight across the Bistritz valley for some indication of the Crown Prince's ararrival upon the field of battle?

The world will, I think, always regard Prince Bismarck as the greatest of the three, whilst it acknowledges that each was, as it were, the mathematical complement of the sum of the other two. The general scheme for the creation of a united Germany—the dream of centuries—was un-doubtedly the work of Prince Bismarck, and evolved out of his own brain. He was the architect of that great edifice; Von Moltke was the contractor who built it, and the splendid old King was their able employer, responsible to his country for the zeal, conduct, and ability of both. Able and skillful as Prince Bismarck's diplomacy undoubtedly was, it would have been but empty vaporing without the weight and influence which it obtained from the great achievements of the Prussian army. The weak nation goes to the wall in all negotiations with foreign countries. In this strange trinity each kept punctiliously to his own special functions. The King, deservedly at the head of the army, most justly inspired general confidence in that high position, as a real solution.

his great strategist, Von Moltke. [TO BE CONTINUED.] [Copyright, 1891, by S. S. - Clure.]

dier in instinct, a splendid fighting soldier

in heart and by his war training. Unlike most of the ordinary soldier princes in his-

tory, he was wise enough to bow on all important military questions to the advice of

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